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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KAMPALA 000526

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID AND OFDA

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (March 10-23, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: Post presents the sixteenth edition of Northern Uganda Notes to provide information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES
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¶2. (SBU) Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda described the discussions between Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony and United Nations Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joaquim Chissano on March 11 as "positive and constructive." Rugunda said that he anticipated another meeting between Kony, the GOU, and Government of South Sudan to work through the LRA's concerns about the Juba venue. Rugunda stated that the LRA did not demand a change in venue, but that its complaints about the mediation secretariat were technical and administrative in nature and could be remedied. On March 23, Rugunda announced the date for the resumption of formal talks at Juba would be April 13. Rugunda and other ministers traveled to Khartoum from March 19-21 to attend a Joint Ministerial Committee for the improvement of relations between Khartoum and Kampala. LRA issues were discussed, but no details have been given.

¶3. (SBU) LRA spokesman Martin Ojul requested that President Museveni's half-brother, Salim Saleh, join the negotiating team. Rugunda stated that the LRA would not dictate the membership of the GOU team, but that Saleh would be available to play a behind-the-scenes role as appropriate. In December 2006, Kony had also requested Saleh's participation in the negotiations.

¶4. (SBU) Thirteen major humanitarian organizations sent a letter to the U.N. Security Council expressing support for the mission of U.N. Special Envoy Chissano. The letter requested a Presidential Statement from the Security Council repeating its demand of 16 November 2006 that the LRA immediately release all women, children, and other non-combatants in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1612 (2005). Other requests include increasing the representation of women and community leaders in the decision-making process at Juba, and a call on the GOU to report on progress made to date on the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan.

¶5. (U) Chissano delivered his report to the U.N. Secretary General on March 22. He announced that the talks would resume in mid-April

and that he was optimistic that a settlement could be reached between the parties. The U.N. Security Council issued a presidential statement reiterating its support for an expeditious negotiated settlement and that those responsible for serious human rights violation be brought to justice. The UNSC also urged the LRA to release women, children, and other non-combatants.

16. (SBU) European donors met with the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Kampala on March 19 to discuss issues related to the Juba Initiative Fund (JIF). One of the key complaints of the LRA delegation to Juba was the "mismanagement" of the fund. The JIF was an added responsibility to an overstretched UNOCHA office in Juba and a key problem was the approval mechanism, which required the GOSS to approve payments. It was slow to do so, prompting the LRA delegates to claim that the GOSS' non-payment of allowances was tied to their failure to "deliver" at the negotiating table. Another problem was that guidelines for acceptable expenditures were never developed. The donors agreed that UNOCHA would send a letter to donors to request that the costs of African Union representatives to the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team could be covered by the fund. Donors were still considering whether or not to pay allowances or "pocket money" to LRA delegates. Another issue would be determining the amount of the allowances.

17. (SBU) USG Activities: On March 15, PolChief and USAID Peace and Security Team leader met with Ambassador Busho Ndinyenka, Uganda's Consul in Juba. Busho believed the talks would resume by the end of March, but was pessimistic that there would be any progress made. He said that for a peace deal to be signed, Kony and Otti would have to be convinced of their own security and that of their fighters. According to Busho, Kony and Otti do not believe that President Museveni would keep his end of a deal. He was pleased that a representative of Congolese President Kabila participated in the

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meeting with Kony and Otti. Busho's skepticism was echoed by Moses Byaruhanga, Museveni's political advisor, who told PolChief that the key obstacle to persuading Kony and Otti to give up was that the LRA leaders do not believe they can live safely in Uganda.

18. (SBU) DCM Chritton and PolChief met with Human Rights Watch's (HRW) Director for the International Justice Program, Richard Dicker, and Elise Keppler, Counsel for the International Justice Program on March 15. Dicker and Keppler spent ten days in northern Uganda examining the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and justice for those LRA members indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Human Rights Watch supports a peaceful resolution of the conflict, but does not want the "price" for a peace settlement to be the bargaining away of justice for the victims. Dicker and Keppler found that an ICC trial was appropriate, but not enough to address the horrific crimes committed. The team suggested a truth and reconciliation mechanism to allow victims to come together and give testimony as a way to heal communities. Overall, most northerners want justice, but Dicker noted that there was some dissent over whether or not the Acholi traditional practice of reconciliation (Mato Oput) would be sufficient to cover all of the LRA's victims.

19. (SBU) Ambassador Browning attended a briefing by Acholi traditional leader David Rwot Acana on March 21. Acana discussed the outcome of the Acholi Conference held in Juba from March 2-4. He stated that he understood that the process of reconciliation must extend beyond Acholiland. The purpose of the gathering of Acholi leaders in Juba was to "get the Acholi house in order" before meeting with leaders in Teso, Lango, and West Nile. Acana also stated that land problems were becoming a much more contentious issue. He bemoaned the fact that in the past, elders settled squabbles, but now other groups were staking out claims of their own. He said there would be more outreach to donors for help in addressing land issues.

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SECURITY UPDATE
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¶10. (U) As a result of the improved security in Kitgum, a number of NGOs have stopped using military escorts. UN agencies in the district access some 17 of 25 IDP camps without military escort. Many agencies also were able to spend nights in the camps, while a number of them have permanently deployed staff at project areas such as health centers in the camps. Child night commuting in the district may be coming to an end with efforts by child protection agencies to phase out completely the phenomenon. Along with improved security, the support by UNICEF and its partners to assess the situation of the night commuter caseload and provide outreach activities in areas of return has contributed to a dramatic reduction in night commuter numbers.

¶11. (U) The improved security in northern Uganda also has led to increased access to land for cultivation and food security. Agencies in the district have begun distribution of agricultural inputs including seeds and tools to over 50,000 households in IDP camps. The water situation in Kitgum was likely to improve with the movement of people from the camps and recent efforts by humanitarian agencies to provide water points at most areas of return. Sanitation remains appalling in most camps, however, with average latrine coverage of 78.4 persons per latrine compared with a minimum sphere standard of 20.

¶12. (U) The judiciary's program to eliminate backlogged court cases and decongest prisons in northern Uganda was restarted on March 19. Principal Justice James Ogoola launched the second round of court sessions, which will take place in five cities. A backlog of 340 cases could be cleared in Lira at the completion of the sessions.

¶13. (U) The Ugandan Police Force expressed disappointment that only 60 of the 500 candidates for recruitment were women during a recent recruitment exercise in northern Uganda. The UPF's target for female recruitment is 30 percent.

¶14. (U) Press reports indicated that the LRA killed one person on March 20 in Southern Sudan. Some 1,500 persons were allegedly displaced in eastern Equatoria, southern Sudan, according to the Sudan Tribune as reported in Ugandan newspapers. The rebels looted food from a town nine miles east of Torit.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

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¶15. (SBU) On March 9, the Government of Uganda issued a second draft Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda, for consultations with stakeholders and development partners. The overall goal of the three-year PRDP is to consolidate peace and security and lay the foundation for recovery and development. This is to be achieved through four strategic objectives: (1) consolidation of state authority (peace, security, justice, law and order, strengthened local governance); (2) rebuilding and empowering communities (return and reintegration of IDPs, community rehabilitation and development, protection of the vulnerable); (3) revitalization of the economy (production and marketing, services and industry, rehabilitation of critical infrastructure, sustainable environmental and natural resource management); and (4) peace-building and reconciliation (information, counseling, intra/inter-communal and national conflict resolution, socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants). The estimated cost of the plan is \$539 million or \$65 per person over a three-year period. The original PRDP request was for approximately \$350 million.

¶16. (U) Problems with the food pipeline for northern Uganda caused World Food Program (WFP) to announce cuts in rations for IDPs and refugees. WFP is cutting ration sizes to 40 percent of kilocalorie (kcal) needs for 1.2 million IDPs in northern Uganda, as well as 183,000 refugees in various locations throughout northern and western Uganda. Currently, approximately 15 percent of the IDPs are already at 40 percent kcal ration, with the remaining at 50 or 60 percent kcal ration. Additionally, WFP reports that there are not enough resources to continue with school lunches for 600,000 students across the LRA affected areas, refugee camps, and in

drought stricken Karamoja. Drought relief for 500,000 people in Karamoja was slower than anticipated due to IDP resettlement patterns in northern Uganda and a reduction in overall contributions to WFP/Uganda, which led to the food aid cuts. The level of USG contributions to WFP/Uganda in dollar value was virtually unchanged from last fiscal year at this time: March 2006 (\$28 million) and March 2007 (\$27.4 million).

¶17. (U) Even with the cuts in ration size and school feeding, the most recent WFP projections show the pipeline breaking in May absent significant contributions. WFP states that potential consequences of the cuts include worsening nutritional status especially for children, women, and the elderly, as well as the potential for the adoption of risky coping mechanisms by the IDPs. USAID believes that the cuts could affect resettlement efforts because WFP does not have sufficient stocks to provide 3-month resettlement or repatriation packages to IDPs or refugees, respectively. WFP was unable to fulfill a GOU request to WFP to provide resettlement packages to 130,000 IDPs in Gulu District. The three-month food aid resettlement packages are viewed as critical for resettling IDP households as they return to their home or to smaller camps closer to their agricultural lands.

¶18. (SBU) USG Activities: The USAID Mission Director signed an MOU with the Governor of the Bank of Uganda on March 14 to formalize the opening of a USAID satellite office in Gulu, housed in the Regional Office of the Bank of Uganda.

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FROM THE MEDIA AND THE WEB
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¶19. (U) International Crisis Group and the Center for American Progress launched their "ENOUGH" campaign on March 14 to "galvanize public and political leaders to effectively confront mass violence against innocent civilians" in Darfur, northern Uganda, and eastern Congo. The campaign includes reports, analysis, and policy recommendations aimed at decision-makers, activists, and the public. The press release stated that ENOUGH would benefit from ICG's experts on the ground to produce a series of policy papers focused on what the international community, particularly the United States, could do to prevent mass atrocities and genocide. According to ENOUGH's co-founder Gayle Smith, the group's strategy is to promote durable peace efforts, provide protection for the innocent victims of mass atrocities, and punish the perpetrators to break the cycle of impunity.
BROWNING